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Prime Minister's schedule, October 18

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 19, 2009

10:40 Participated in Denenchofu Clean Festa with wife Miyuki at Denenchofu Seseragi Park.

12:09 Had lunch with wife Miyuki at Chinese restaurant in Denenchofu Razan.

12:55 Went to Denenchofu Branch of Precce supermarket.

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13:17 Arrived at private residence.

4) U.S. to accept minor change to Futenma relocation plan; presses Japan for implementation of agreement

ASAHI (Top play) (Excerpts)
October 19, 2009

Hiroshi Ito, Washington

A high-ranking U.S. Defense Department official indicated that Washington would accept moving the envisaged facility replacing the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture) about 50 meters further offshore than under the existing plan, adding that the U.S. government would not accept major changes to the existing plan. The official pressed the Hatoyama administration, which is exploring ways to move the air station out of Okinawa or even out of the country, for the early implementation of a bilateral agreement, warning that the failure to implement the agreement would deal a serious blow to relationship of trust between Japan and the United States.

The official revealed the view ahead of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates's visit to Japan on Oct. 20. Tokyo and Washington reached an agreement in 2006 on the existing (Futenma) relocation plan as part of a "package deal" that includes the relocation of U.S. Marine Corps to Guam and the return of U.S. military bases and facilities in Okinawa. Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima later requested the alternative Futenma facility be located further offshore than the planned site, and the Hatoyama administration is examining how the Henoko district was selected as the relocation site.

"It is natural for the new administration to reexamine how the bilateral agreement was reached," the high-ranking U.S. official said. "We believe the agreement is worth implementing." The official also said that major changes to the existing plan would result in other decisions, indicating that such would have an impact on other agreements made between Japan and the United States besides U.S. force realignment. The official repeatedly expressed hope for the implementation of the existing agreement.

The official showed some understanding about moving the replacement facility offshore, saying, "If the governor calls for moving the facility 50 meters, it is a matter that concerns the governor and the Japanese government," adding, "If the Japanese government proposes it to the United States, it will be studied within the framework of the existing agreement."

According to the Japanese government's study, the replacement facility can be moved 55 meters or so without redoing the environmental impact assessment. The high-ranking official indicated that the facility can be moved 50 meters or so without making changes to a set of procedures, such as the environmental assessment, within the framework of the existing agreement.

At the same time, on the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling

mission in the Indian Ocean, which is to expire next January, the official showed understanding for the withdrawal of the force. The Hatoyama administration is earnestly looking for new measures to support Afghanistan in place of the refueling mission. "Assistance does not have to be military," the official said.

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5) Cabinet Office requests continuation of development of Futenma functions relocation site in fiscal 2010

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
October 17, 2009

In return for the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station to Nago City in the northern part of the main island of Okinawa, over the last 10 years the government has been carrying out the North Development Program, under which 10 billion yen has been allocated annually for Okinawa Prefecture, Nago City, and 12 other municipalities. The government fundamentally intends to continue the program with the Cabinet Office asking for 7 billion yen in its estimated budget request, submitted on Oct. 16, for fiscal 2010. State Minister for Okinawa Seiji Maehara said, "I will not link this program to the base issue. Along with Okinawa Prefecture, I would like to press ahead with the program, which will promote Okinawa's economic independence and development." He thus explained that the ministry has filed the request regardless of the fate of the Futenma relocation issue.

6) Hatoyama eyes reaching conclusion next year on Futenma relocation

ASAHI (Page 1) (Abridged)
October 17, 2009

Prime Minister Hatoyama clarified yesterday that he will postpone making a final decision until next year on the pending issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture. This is apparently because there is no prospect for "moving Futenma airfield out of Okinawa Prefecture or Japan" as pledged by his ruling Democratic Party of Japan in its manifesto.

However, Japan and the United States have already reached an intergovernmental agreement to relocate the heliport functions of Futenma airfield to Henoko in the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago by 2014. To that end, the government will presumably have to start the construction of an alternative base there during the next fiscal year. The U.S. government is also likely to call on the Hatoyama government to accept the agreement.

7) Okada aiming to reach conclusion later this year on Futenma relocation

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged)
October 18, 2009

Foreign Minister Okada yesterday underscored his intention to reach a conclusion by the end of this year on the pending issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Hatoyama implied his intent to postpone making a final decision on the issue. "The question is whether to earmark it in the fiscal 2010 budget, so I'm expecting to decide by the end of this year," Okada told a press conference held yesterday in the city of Tsu, Mie Prefecture. Asked about Hatoyama's remarks, however, Okada went no further than to comment that Hatoyama meant to say it would be better to proceed with the matter in a cautious manner.

8) Government considering allowing refueling vessel to serve on antipiracy mission

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SANKEI (Top play) (Excerpts)

October 19, 2009

Given the likelihood that the Maritime Self-Defense Force's supply vessel is likely to be withdrawn from the Indian Ocean, the government is looking into the option of allowing the ship to provide fuel to foreign vessels engaged in antipiracy operations off Somalia. Many U.S. and European naval vessels that were engaged in antiterrorism operations in the Indian Ocean are now combating piracy off Somalia. The view is prevalent in the Japanese government that refueling services off Somalia can be a new means to contribute to the international community, making up for the termination of the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. If the government can obtain the understanding of the Social Democratic Party, which is reluctant to send the Self-Defense Forces on overseas missions, the United States and European countries, this might emerge as a strong option for replacing the refueling mission.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has repeatedly indicated that the government will not simply extend the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. The government is considering providing civilian support to Afghanistan to replace the refueling mission. Whether Tokyo can obtain the understanding of Washington, which expects contribution in personnel, with the Somalia piracy plan alone remains to be seen.

9) U.S. Department of State hopes Japan will continue assistance to Afghanistan

SANKEI (Page 8) (Full)
October 17, 2009

The Hatoyama administration is now coordinating views with the possibility of withdrawing Maritime Self-Defense Force personnel from their refueling mission in the Indian Ocean. Referring to this, U.S. State Department Deputy Spokesman Wood at a press conference on Oct. 15 said, "What Japan does in the future is up to Japan to work out." However, he continued, "We hope that Japan will find a way to continue to assist the ongoing operations in Afghanistan." Wood highly praised Japan's refueling operation, saying, "It was a very important contribution. We are deeply grateful."

10) LDP to submit refueling bill, other legislation at upcoming extra Diet session

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 19, 2009

Appearing on a NHK talk show yesterday, the main opposition Liberal Democratic Party's Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Jiro Kawasaki said the LDP will submit a special measures bill designed to facilitate cargo inspections of ships going in and out of North Korea, as well as a bill to continue the Maritime-Self Defense Force refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, at the upcoming extraordinary Diet session, to be convened on Oct. 26. He also said on the TV talk show, "Although we will discuss the matter with the New Komeito, we will submit the bills as lawmaker-initiated legislation to the Diet."

11) U.S. concern about East Asian Community initiative groundless, says foreign minister

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NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 17, 2009

Referring to U.S. concern about Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's Initiative for an East Asian Community, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada at a press conference on Oct. 16 said, "(The U.S. concern) is groundless. It is an overreaction to worry about it at this stage." He also took the view that it is not necessary to rush to come up with the specifics of the initiative, noting, "It is a vision for the future. There is no need to make it concrete in the beginning."

12) FM Okada indicates willingness to discuss no-first-use of nuclear weapons with U.S., implying government's policy switch

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)
October 19, 2009

In a speech presented in Kyoto yesterday, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said: "I hope Japan and the U.S. will thoroughly discuss the issue of no-first-use of nuclear weapons," on the premise that the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament, an expert panel, will compile a report by the end of the year. Okada said that the report is now likely to include the policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons. He emphasized: "We would like to respect the policy and to make it the government's policy."

Okada pointed out: "The government has so far asked the U.S. to refrain from referring to the policy (of no-first-use of nuclear weapons) because of a possible weakening of (the U.S.'s) nuclear deterrence capability." He then remarked: "We cannot rule out the policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons as a major policy direction of the government," indicating a possibility that the government would revise its policy.

13) U.S. Defense Secretary Gates to arrive in Japan tomorrow; might accept moving planned runways further offshore without making change to Futenma relocation site

SANKEI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
October 19, 2009

Takashi Arimoto, Washington

A U.S. government official underscored to the Sankei Shimbun on Oct. 17 that the governments of Japan and the United States have settled on the coastal area of Camp Schwab as the relocation site for the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture) after many years of talks between the two sides. The official reiterated the U.S. view that it cannot accept a plan that has emerged in Japan to integrate the functions of Futenma Air Station into Kadena Air Base.

At the same time, the official indicated that if the Hatoyama administration accepts the relocation of Futenma to the coastal area of Camp Schwab in Okinawa, Washington is ready to consider Okinawa's call for moving the envisaged runways further offshore than the planned site. The official was apparently putting pressure on the Japanese government to accept the existing replacement site by exhibiting a flexible stance about making a change to the planned construction site for the runways ahead of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' visit to Japan on Oct. 20.

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Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima has been calling for the planned runways be moved further offshore than the planned site in the Henoko district. The official indicated that the U.S. government would accept moving the (runways) 50 meters or so, saying, "It is a matter that concerns the Japanese government and Okinawa, and if there is a formal request from the Japanese side, we will look into it."

Secretary Gates is scheduled to stay in Japan until Oct. 21. In his talks with Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, Secretary Gates is expected to tell his Japanese counterpart that the Futenma relocation was agreed upon not between two political parties but between the governments of Japan and the United States after explaining the status of progress on the U.S. side for the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan.

14) Top U.S. brass to visit Japan

NIKKEI (Page 9) (Full)
October 17, 2009

Sachiko Deshimaru

WASHINGTON-Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mullen, who tops the United States' armed services, will visit Japan next weekend,

sources said Oct. 15. Mullen is expected to visit Japan after Secretary of Defense Gates's planned visit to Japan from Oct. 20. Mullen will meet with Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa and others, and he is expected to discuss such issues as the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan and the North Korean situation. He will also convey his gratitude to his Japanese counterparts for the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling activities in the Indian Ocean, Japanese and U.S. government officials revealed.

15) Okada says gov't to review SOFA next year

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
October 17, 2009

Foreign Minister Okada met yesterday with Kanagawa Gov. Shigefumi Matsuzawa at the Foreign Ministry. During the meeting, they discussed the issue of revising the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, or SOFA for short. "It's an issue we are going to address next year," Okada told Matsuzawa. The ruling Democratic Party of Japan, in its manifesto, pledged to revise SOFA provisions.

16) Poll: Cabinet support at 72 PERCENT

MAINICHI (Page 1) (Abridged)
October 19, 2009

The Mainichi Shimbun conducted a nationwide public opinion survey regarding the Hatoyama cabinet, which has now been in office for a month since taking the reins of government. The Hatoyama cabinet's support rate was 72 PERCENT, remaining high despite a drop of 5 points from the last survey conducted Sept. 16-17 shortly after its debut. The nonsupport rate was 17 PERCENT. Among those who support the now-ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), 99 PERCENT supported the Hatoyama cabinet. In addition, 57 PERCENT of those with no particular party affiliation and 39 PERCENT of those who support the now-opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) supported

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the Hatoyama cabinet.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the DPJ stood at 40 PERCENT, down 5 points from the last survey. The LDP was at 14 PERCENT, inching up from its record low of 12 PERCENT in the last survey. Asked about the desirable framework of government after next summer's election for the House of Councillors, respondents were split, with 36 PERCENT choosing the DPJ's single-party government and 32 PERCENT preferring the current DPJ-led coalition with the Social Democratic Party and the People's New Party.

17) Poll: 53 PERCENT see discord in coalition gov't over security issues, Japan-U.S. relations

YOMIURI (Top play) (Abridged)
October 18, 2009

The Yomiuri Shimbun conducted a face-to-face nationwide public opinion survey on Oct. 10-11. In the survey, a total of 53 PERCENT, or more than half the respondents, answered "no" when asked if they thought the tripartite coalition government led by Prime Minister Hatoyama and comprising the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) and its two coalition partners, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the People's New Party (PNP), was functioning well. "Yes" accounted for only 33 PERCENT. Respondents were also asked what issues they thought were dividing the three ruling parties. To this question, 21 PERCENT chose "security," topping all other choices. Among other choices, "Japan-U.S. relations" accounted for 18 PERCENT, followed by "an overhaul of postal privatization" at 15 PERCENT and "a fiscal turnaround" at 11 PERCENT.

It has now been about a month since the new DPJ-led government came into office. The SDP has been strongly calling for a review of the current plan to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan, Okinawa Prefecture. Meanwhile, the PNP has insisted on overhauling postal privatization and has called for introducing a loan moratorium system for the sake of small businesses. The public

apparently saw such developments as indicating disharmony within the coalition government.

18) Poll: Cabinet support remains over 70 PERCENT

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Abridged)
October 19, 2009

The rate of public support for Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and his cabinet remained high at 73 PERCENT in the latest public opinion survey jointly conducted by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun and TV Tokyo on Oct. 16-18, though the figure was down 2 percentage points from the last survey conducted in September right after the Hatoyama cabinet's inauguration. The nonsupport rate rose 4 points to 21 PERCENT. In the survey, respondents were also asked if they approved of the Hatoyama cabinet's job performance. To this question, "yes" accounted for 61 PERCENT, the highest level among recent cabinets.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the ruling Democratic Party of Japan stood at 55 PERCENT, down 3 points from the last survey. The opposition Liberal Democratic Party dropped 1 point to 21 PERCENT.

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The Hatoyama cabinet's approval rating was over 60 PERCENT among all generations. The highest figure came from those in their 30s, reaching 81 PERCENT. By gender, the Hatoyama cabinet's support rate was 75 PERCENT among male respondents and 71 PERCENT among female respondents. Among DPJ supporters, the Hatoyama cabinet's support rate was 96 PERCENT. Also, a third of those supporting the LDP supported the Hatoyama cabinet.

Polling methodology: The survey was taken by Nikkei Research Inc. over the telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,553 households with one or more eligible voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 1,008 persons (64.9 PERCENT).

19) Poll: Hatoyama cabinet's support rate at 60.6 PERCENT, 3rd highest ever

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged)
October 17, 2009

The public approval rating for Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and his cabinet marked 60.6 PERCENT in a public opinion survey conducted by Jiji Press on Oct. 9-10. The disapproval rating was 15.6 PERCENT. It was the first Jiji Press poll for the Hatoyama cabinet since coming into office. The Hatoyama cabinet's support rate upon its inauguration scored the third highest percentage among its predecessors ever since the Ikeda cabinet was launched in July 1960, following the Koizumi cabinet at 72.8 PERCENT in a survey conducted in May 2001 and the Hosokawa cabinet at 62.9 PERCENT in a survey conducted in August 1993. The figure apparently reflects the public's expectations for the Democratic Party of Japan's manifesto that pledged such policies as breaking away from dependence on bureaucrats.

The survey was conducted across the nation on a face-to-face basis, with a total of 2,000 persons chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over. The response rate was 67.4 PERCENT.

20) Eight ambassadors ask justice minister to sign Hague Convention

MAINICHI (Page 28) (Slightly abridged)
October 17, 2009

Junichi Ishikawa

U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos and the ambassadors of seven other countries visited Justice Minister Keiko Chiba at the Ministry of Justice on Oct. 16 and asked that Japan sign the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

The eight ambassadors issued a joint statement after the meeting, saying: "Parents whose children have been taken away to Japan have no hope of reclaiming their children, making it extremely difficult to exercise parental rights. It is important to find a concrete solution. We will cooperate positively with the new administration." At a news conference held after the cabinet meeting on the same day, Chiba said: "I am aware that there are international opinions on this issue. We will deal with this based on the overall trend."

The Hague Convention stipulates that when the parent whose children have been taken away applies to reclaim his or her children, the

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government of the country where the children have been taken is obliged to cooperate in returning them to the original country of residence. Japan and Russia are the only G-8 countries that are not signatories to the Convention.

21) Japan's membership in the Hague Convention to take two years at the least

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)
October 18, 2009

It was learned that while the government plans to speed up efforts to sign the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction setting the rules for settling disputes arising from international marriages, the submission of the related bills to the Diet, which will be the prerequisite for membership in the Convention, will not take place until 2011.

The Hague Convention stipulates that if one parent in a failed international marriage takes the children to his or her home country without the other parent's consent, the children will be returned to their original country of residence.

One reason why Japan is hesitant to sign the convention is because many cases in which Japanese mothers bring their children back to Japan involve domestic violence by the ex-husband.

However, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada has announced that steps will be taken promptly to study signing the convention. On Oct. 16 U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos and the ambassadors and ministers of seven other countries asked Justice Minister Keiko Chiba to sign the convention at an early date. With rising pressure from the international community, there is now increasing momentum in favor of signing the convention.

However, legislation of the required domestic laws will take time. Signatories to the convention are obliged to locate the children and return them to their countries of residence in cases where they have been taken away. Specifically, a "central authority" of the government will serve as the point of contact for receiving complaints from parents whose children have been taken away, and if the courts rule that the children should be returned, the offending parents will be ordered to return the children.

For this reason, the National Government Organization Law will have to be amended and new special laws will also have to be legislated to authorize the courts to issue orders to return children. The Justice Ministry's Legislative Council has advised that "deliberations will take one year," according to a senior ministry official. Therefore, the submission of the related bills to the Diet, which will be the prerequisite for signing the Hague Convention, can only take place at the regular Diet session in 2011 at the earliest, and it is likely that Diet approval may take even longer.

ROOS